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CURRENT LITERATURE

BOOK REVIEWS

A practical plant biochemistry

MRS. ONSLOW¹ has just written an interesting descriptive text and laboratory manual on plant biochemistry. The author is already well known as an investigator of anthocyanins, and also as the author of "The anthocyanin pigments of plants," under the name of MURIEL WHELDALE.

The aim of the book is stated as follows: "This book is intended primarily for students of botany. Such students' knowledge of plant products is usually obtained, on the one hand from organic chemistry, and on the other hand from plant physiology. Between these two standpoints there is a gap, which, it is hoped, the following pages may help to fill. It is essentially a textbook for practical work, on an aspect of plant biochemistry which has received up to the present time very little consideration in teaching. A number of experiments have been devised and have been actually tested in practical classes. These experiments should enable a student to extract from the plant itself the chemical compounds of which it is constituted, and to learn something of their properties."

The book consists of the following chapters: Introduction (9 pp.); The colloidal state (7 pp.); Enzyme action (9 pp.); Carbon assimilation (15 pp.); Carbohydrates and their hydrolizing enzymes (38 pp.); Fats and lipases (8 pp.); Aromatic compounds and oxidizing enzymes (31 pp.); Proteins and proteases (24 pp.); Glucosides and glucoside-splitting enzymes (12 pp.); and Plant bases (12 pp.).

The reviewer believes the author has done plant science a great service in preparing the book. It should be welcomed by all workers in the field.—WM. CROCKER.

New Zealand plants

A country possessing a vegetation of more than usual luxuriance and variety is indeed to be congratulated when it is fortunate enough to have its forests and grasslands described by a botanist who combines a thorough scientific knowledge with the rare ability of presenting scientific facts in language at once accurate and intelligible to the citizen with no scientific training. COCKAYNE² seems to have accomplished this difficult task in a volume which

¹ ONSLOW, MURIEL WHELDALE, *Practical plant biochemistry*. 8vo. pp. 178. Cambridge: University Press. 1920.

² COCKAYNE, L., *New Zealand plants and their story*. 8vo. xv+248. *figs.* 113. 1919. 2d ed. Wellington: M. F. Marks, Government Printer.

is essentially a new book rather than a second edition of that formerly noted.³

Beginning with a sketch of the history of the botanical exploration of New Zealand, and noting the landmarks in her botanical literature, the author instructs the reader regarding the fundamental concepts of plant ecology in clear and simple terms, preparing him to follow appreciatively the description of New Zealand plants, not only considered as individuals, but as grouped in communities. Separate chapters are devoted to the vegetation of the sea coast, the inland waters, the mountains, and the outlying islands, as well as to the forests, the scrub, and the grasslands. The descriptions are so good that not only may they be understood by the New Zealand school boy (for it is an authorized textbook in the public schools), but they may also serve to furnish a graphic picture of a unique vegetation to the ecologists of other lands. For the latter the separation of New Zealand into botanical districts and the analysis of the flora into its different elements is particularly interesting. Moreover, the botanist is not at a loss to know what plants are intended by their common designations, for the scientific names always follow. In this, as well as in the use of many excellent illustrations, the volume may well be regarded as showing a standard of excellence seldom attained.—GEO. D. FULLER.

MINOR NOTICES

Cactaceae.—The second volume of the elaborate monograph of Cactaceae by BRITTON and ROSE⁴ has just appeared. In fullness of description and wealth of illustration it leaves nothing to be desired. The colored plates are particularly noteworthy. The volume includes two of the eight subtribes of Cereae. In subtribe Cereaneae, 38 genera are recognized, including 16 new genera as follows: *Monvillea*, *Espostoa*, *Browningia*, *Stelsonia*, *Corryocactus*, *Erdisia*, *Leocereus*, *Dendrocereus*, *Machaerocereus*, *Brachycereus*, *Jasminocereus*, *Binghamia*, *Arrojadoa*, *Facheiroa*, *Zehnterella*, and *Neoraimondia*. There are also described 40 new species distributed among the various genera. The subtribe Hylocereanae includes nine genera, *Wilmattea*, *Mediocactus*, and *Deamia* being new, and 48 species, 6 of which are new. The monograph is an impressive illustration of the extensiveness of the cactus flora and its need of taxonomic reconstruction.—J.M.C.

Flora of Jamaica.—The fourth volume of FAWCETT and RENDLE's *Flora of Jamaica*⁵ continues the Dicotyledons, which began in the third volume,

³ BOT. GAZ. 52: 159. 1911.

⁴ BRITTON, N. L., and ROSE, J. N., The Cactaceae. Vol. II. Publ. Carnegie Inst. no. 248. pp. vii+239. pls. 40. figs. 305. 1920.

⁵ FAWCETT, W., and RENDLE, A. B., Flora of Jamaica, containing descriptions of the flowering plants known from the island. Vol. IV. Dicotyledons (Leguminosae to Callitrichaceae). 8vo. xv+369. figs. 114. Published by the British Museum. 1920.